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Baesler Supports Fewer ND Student Tests

BISMARCK, N.D., Sept. 14, 2015 – North Dakota Superintendent Kirsten Baesler says her new task force on student assessments will explore how to reduce the number of tests given in the state’s classrooms, while still providing needed information about students’ academic progress.

Baesler is chairwoman of the task force. At its first meeting last week, the group’s 33 members received background information on assessments, and sketched out their ideas about the questions and issues the task force should address.

They include: Why are assessments done, and why are they important? Which ones are required by state and federal law? How much instructional time does it take to give them? What makes a test “standardized” and why is that important? Which assessment or assessments provide the information that the public needs? How can all stakeholders get the information they need with fewer tests?

Baesler said she supports reducing the number of assessments that North Dakota students are taking.

“As an educator over the last 25 years, I have seen the increasing number of assessments that our students have been given,” Baesler said. “I have seen that as a parent, I have seen that as a teacher, I have seen that as an administrator, and I see that as a state superintendent.”

State and federal law requires that the North Dakota State Assessment in English, mathematics and science be given once during grades 9-12. State law also mandates that 11th graders take the ACT college entrance exam.

Baesler said two possibilities would be to look at moving the North Dakota State Assessment out of the 11th grade, or allowing the ACT exam to count as North Dakota’s statewide assessment for high school juniors.

The assessment task force will be looking into the issue. The group includes parents, teachers and administrators from public and nonpublic schools, assessment and technology experts, home educators, legislators, business people and higher education officials.

Baesler said the task force’s next meeting will be in October.

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